

West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board

Information for adults living with
an Autism Spectrum Condition
in West Berkshire



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Contents

Introduction	3
Useful contacts at a glance	4
What is Autism?	6
Social communication and Interaction	7
Patterns of interest, behaviour and activities.....	9
Resources and support for social communication.....	9
Sensory Differences.....	9
Strengths.....	10
General Autism Spectrum Resources.....	11
Charities.....	12
Social Care	13
Advocacy	13
Education	14
University	15
Employment.....	16
Families.....	18
Relationships	19
Romantic and Sexual Relationships	20
Leisure activities and support groups.....	21
Mental ill health and promoting mental wellbeing.....	23
Help and support for mental health	24
Benefits, budgeting and finance.....	26
Useful books	28
Mobile apps.....	28

Introduction

This pack is for adults who have either received a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) or for people who haven't received a formal diagnosis but suspect they might be autistic (visit this website for information on how to get an autism diagnosis; <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/autismsupport>). Knowing what information and support is on offer and how to find it can be difficult. That is why we have produced this information pack for you. We hope it will ensure that you have the information you need, when you need it. There is a great deal of information in this pack and we are not suggesting that you sit down and read it through all in one go. It is designed so that you can refer to the sections that you need, when you need to. This information pack is also available electronically. Please visit this link: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/autismsupport>

We have tried to bring together the most important and up-to-date information for you. However, we know that this is a developing area and we are always pleased to receive new information and your suggestions and ideas for improving the pack. If you would like to pass on any comments or suggestions, please contact:

Adult Social Care
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury
West Berkshire
RG14 5LD
Phone: 01635 503050
Email: adultcare@westberks.gov.uk

**Based on a similar pack by Devon Adult Autism and ADHD service (DANANA).
Reproduced with kind permission.**

Useful contacts at a glance

AutAngel

AutAngel is a community interest company run by and for autistic people. AutAngel organise support groups and offer online resources including a calendar of events involving autistic people and a directory of autistic educators offering autism awareness courses. AutAngel run a monthly peer support group in Reading as well as a weekly gardening group and a ten week programme exploring the impact of being autistic.

Website: <https://www.autangel.org.uk/>

Email: info@autangel.org.uk

Phone: 07423 390004

Autism Berkshire

Autism Berkshire provide a range of support for autistic people and their families living in Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire. They provide a helpline service, home visiting, support groups, pre-assessment workshops and autism seminars (e.g. understanding autism, managing anger and sensory needs).

Website: <http://www.autismberkshire.org.uk/community-learning-for-autistic-adults/>

Email: contact@autismberkshire.org.uk

Phone: 01189 594 594

ASD Family Help

ASD Family Help is a user led charity (non-profit) that offers support, advice and activities for autistic and neurodiverse individuals, as well as their parents, carers and professionals within Wokingham and West Berkshire

Website: <http://www.asdfamilyhelp.org>

Email: jayne@asdfamilyhelp.org / rachael@asdfamilyhelp.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ASDFamilyWestBerks

Phone: 07733 601755

Outside West Berkshire

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BHFT)

BHFT provide an assessment service for adults who think that they may have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) such as Asperger's syndrome. In addition to providing assessments, they work with individuals and GPs to help people to understand autism.

Website: <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-sites/reading/25-erleigh-road/>

Phone: 0118 9296477

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

If someone feels that their autism spectrum condition affects their ability to drive then they are required to notify the DVLA. You can ask your doctor if you're not sure if your ASC will affect your driving.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/asd-and-driving>

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers a free, informal and confidential, advice, support and information service to patients, their families and carers. They can offer advice

about the NHS and any health-related questions. They can help resolve concerns or problems when you're using the NHS and they can also provide you information about the complaints procedure should you wish to make a complaint.

Website: <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/our-patient-advice-and-liaison-service/>

Email: BHT@berkshire.nhs.uk

Phone: 0118 9605027

The Autism Group:

The Autism Group is a Maidenhead based charity committed to supporting and enhancing the lives of young people on the spectrum, their parents, and carers. They run a variety of special interest clubs for young people aged between 9 and 25 who have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition and are typically of mainstream ability, but need support to succeed in social situations.

Website: <https://www.theautismgroup.org.uk/>

Email: info@theautismgroup.org.uk

Phone: 07423 636339

What is Autism?

“Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.”

(National Autistic Society)



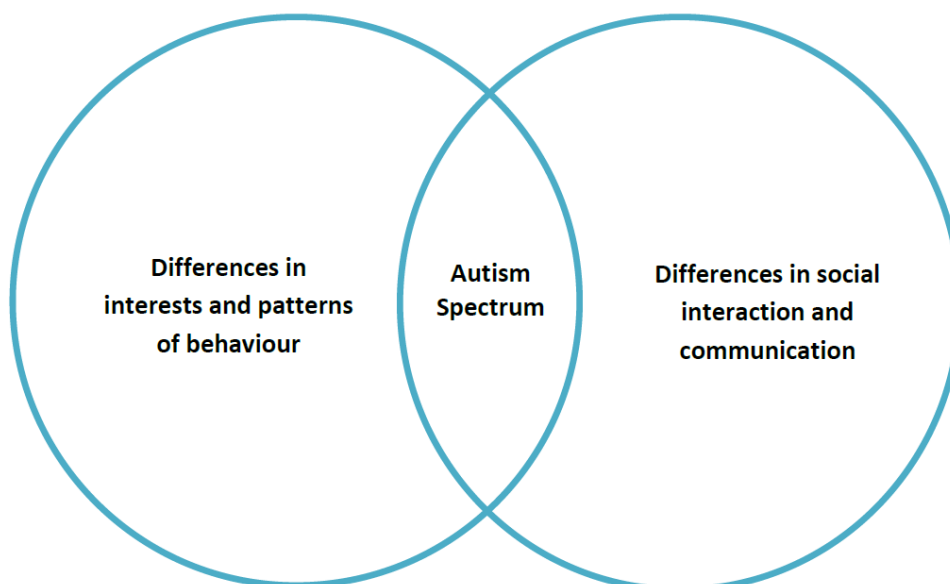
Throughout this booklet we will use the term **Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASCs)** to refer collectively to all the different autism diagnoses, such as Childhood Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome. We will talk later about the differences between these diagnoses, but first of all we will look at what they have in common.

What do people on the autism spectrum have in common?

People on the autism spectrum show differences in two main areas:

- Social interaction and communication
- Patterns of behaviour, interests and activities

This is illustrated by the diagram below:



You may have also heard of the term ‘triad of impairment’ to describe the differences that people on the autism spectrum have. This is referring to the same set of differences.

Later we’ll take more about what these differences are.

What causes ASCs?

ASC's are **neurodevelopmental** disorders. This means that they are the result of differences in the way the brain develops and processes information. Researchers are still trying to understand what causes ASCs.

However we know that:

- People first show the differences associated with ASCs in childhood
- We expect these differences to stay with the person throughout their life (although they may find ways of adapting or adjusting to them)
- There seem to be hereditary links, e.g. the characteristics of ASCs can run in families
- Some people can show characteristics associated with ASCs but not meet the full criteria for a diagnosis.
- ASCs are not caused by 'bad' parenting
- People on the autism spectrum are more likely to have (or show symptoms of) other neurodevelopmental conditions, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyspraxia, and Dyslexia. Autistic people are also often diagnosed with other co-occurring conditions such as Epilepsy and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
- Research also shows that autistic people are more likely to develop physical and mental health concerns than the general population. It's important to consider co-occurring conditions when thinking about the specific support a person needs, while understanding that the needs that arise from being autistic are distinct.

How common are ASCs?

- Research now suggests that about 1.1% of the population have an ASC.
- That means approximately 700,000 people in the UK have an ASC.
- Over the years we have become better at recognising when people have an ASC, however, there are many other reasons why people may not be diagnosed until later in their life.
- ASCs are more common in men. The ratio is thought to be 4 men to every 1 woman. However, it is thought that women on the autism spectrum may be underdiagnosed.

Why is it called the autism spectrum?

We describe it as a spectrum because people with ASCs are all affected differently by the symptoms of autism.

Like any other person, everyone on the autism spectrum is different!

Main characteristics of people on the autism spectrum

These are examples of some of the differences that people on the autism spectrum may show.

Social communication and Interaction

People on the autism spectrum condition often find social situations very difficult. They may:

- Find it difficult to understand gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice
- Find it difficult to know how to start, maintain and end conversations
- Find it difficult to grasp the underlying meaning of certain conversations and to understand jokes, metaphors and sarcasm
- Have unusual eye contact, e.g. avoidant or overly intense
- Have an unusual style of speech

- Find it difficult to have a mutual sharing of ideas and feelings

People on the autism spectrum often find it difficult to understand how to behave and interact with other people. They may have particular difficulties in terms of:

- Understanding unwritten 'social rules' or non-verbal cues. For example, how close to stand to other people, or what is an appropriate conversation topic
- Appearing aloof and uninterested in other people
- Finding it difficult to make and keep friends

There are so many social rules that people without an ASC learn instinctively. People on the autism spectrum often have to work at learning these rules which can be confusing and can cause anxiety. Some communication difficulties that people on the autism spectrum could experience may include:

Taking things literally

People don't always mean exactly what they say. Often people use shortcuts or learnt phrases. For example, someone saying "I'll be back in five minutes" does not always mean they will be exactly five minutes.

Giving too much information

Often people ask general questions in conversation but don't often expect a long and detailed answer. You may learn to pick up on signs that people are getting bored of a conversation, for example if they keep yawning, stop looking at you, or stop asking you questions.

Missing social cues

People don't always like to say directly what they mean if they think it will be impolite. Instead they say things or use their body language or actions to imply something. These cues can be learnt, but are not always easy to work out.

Body language

This can vary across situation, but it can often be intimidating for people to stand too close and talk loudly to other people. It can make them feel afraid.

Changing social rules

The way a person should act or behave often depends on the situation and person they are speaking to. Much of our social interactions with others are based on unspoken or unwritten social "rules" For example, it would be appropriate to say 'Hiya' or "alright" to a friend but not to someone you were meeting in a formal setting. For example when meeting a new client at work the social rule would be to say "hello".

Ways to tackle some of these difficulties:

- If you know the person, you may find telling them about your communication style helpful
- Asking people to be specific when giving you instructions
- If you're not sure what someone means, try to ask them
- Try to consider the perspective of the person who you are communicating with
- Develop your social skills by attending social groups, using internet resources and chat rooms or volunteering with local charities.

Non-verbal Communication

Some autistic people don't use speech, as they may be more visual than verbal. This means that other methods of communication would need to be used as they may not appear to hear

what you say to them or respond to their name. They may be indifferent to any attempts you make to communicate with them.

Non-verbal people may communicate in the following ways:

- Gestures
- Crying
- Taking your hand to the object they want
- Looking at the object they want
- Reaching
- Using pictures
- Challenging behaviour
- Echolalia (the repetition of other people's words).

There is more information about non-verbal communication on the NAS website:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

Patterns of interest, behaviour and activities

People on the autism spectrum may have:

- Difficulties understanding and interpreting the thoughts, feelings, and actions of other people
- Difficulties imagining alternative outcomes to situations, or predicting what will happen next
- Difficulties in generalising things that they have learnt across different situations
- A fondness of routines and doing things in particular ways
- Strong or unusual interests that can be very important to that person
- Differences in how they react to sensory information, e.g. being over or under sensitive to things like noises, touch, or texture.

Resources and support for social communication

Passport to individual autism support

The NAS provide a free printable autism passport, which can help people to better understand your personal social and communication needs.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/physical-health/my-health-passport>

There are plenty of websites where you can also find some help and support on social communication. The NAS have some help and tips on their website which you can find here:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication>

Sensory Differences

Some people on the autism spectrum experience differences in how they process information from the world around them. Different people may be under or over sensitive to different sensory experiences. Sensory differences are increasingly being recognized as a characteristic of the autism spectrum and is now also included in the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder in the DSM-V.

Some people describe experiencing intense sensory experiences in terms of **sounds, lights, smells, touches or tastes**. However they may also experience differences in terms of other senses such as pain perception, temperature perception and balance. To date, we do not really know why sensory issues occur in association with autism spectrum conditions. However we do

know that they tend to be lifelong issues. There are some ways to adjust your lifestyle to minimize experiences of sensory sensitivities.

Build self-awareness

- Being aware of your sensitivities can make it easier to modify your environment as needed.
- Ask people close to you to be more understanding
- At work discuss the possibilities of making adjustments to your environment with human resources or your boss.

Avoiding or tolerating aversive sensory experiences

- Recognise that some events / places are just too much and give yourself permission to limit the time you spend there or avoid them.
- Take a break from sensory irritants and recharge your coping abilities

Reducing the intensity of the experience

- Carry earplugs to use in the event of loud noise
- Use sunglasses or a baseball cap in bright areas or try changing, dimming, obstructing or turning off the light

Further information and advice can be found on the National Autistic Society website

<http://www.autism.org.uk/sensory>

Strengths

People on the autism spectrum often experience various difficulties in their lives as mentioned above, however these differences can also result in having many **strengths**. For example:

- Loyalty and dependability in relationships with other people.
- Honesty
- An ability to do certain things in very precise careful ways
- An enthusiasm for unique interests and topics, which can make them extremely knowledgeable
- An ability to notice details that other people may miss
- High sensitivity to certain things

Types of ASCs

Over the years a number of different diagnoses (or labels) have been used to describe autistic people. Here are some of them:

- Autistic Disorder
- Childhood Autism
- Asperger's Syndrome
- High-Functioning Autism
- Atypical Autism
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder (Not otherwise specified)

A new diagnostic system (DSM 5) uses the term **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** to replace all the terms above, and this is increasingly being used by clinicians.

Here is some more information about the different diagnostic labels above.

Autistic Disorder or Childhood Autism

People with this diagnosis have the main features of the autism spectrum as well as having some type of delay in their early development, e.g. learning to talk at a later age than is typical. Some people with this diagnosis have a learning disability, while others may have a normal level of intelligence. Those people with autistic disorder who have average or above average intelligence are sometimes described as having **High-Functioning Autism**. This does **not** mean that they are less affected by autism.

Asperger's Syndrome

The diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome is given to people who show the main features of the autism spectrum, but who do not have a history of delayed development, and have average or above average intelligence.

Atypical Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not otherwise specified

For this diagnosis to be given, some but not all the symptoms necessary for a diagnosis of Autism are present.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The diagnostic term ASD is increasingly being used to replace the separate diagnoses described above.

For further information about autism, please look at some of the websites in the next section.

General Autism Spectrum Resources

Below are a selection of sites and resources providing various bits of information about autism spectrum, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Asperger's Syndrome, that we hope you will find helpful.

British Psychological Society (BPS)

The British Psychological Society have developed a series of e-learning modules to help people learning more about autism. The modules are; building awareness of adult autism, supporting autistic adults and Psychological work and autism. Each module is completed online and costs £50.00 for non-members.

Website: <https://learn.bps.org.uk/>

Email: learning@bps.org.uk

Fulfilling and rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England

The autism strategy was published by the Department of Health in 2010. 'Think Autism' sets out a clear programme that the Department of Health and other government departments will be taking to improve the lives of autistic adults, primarily through taking actions that will support local authorities, the NHS, other public services and their partners with their local implementation work.

It is available to download by:

1. Searching: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>
2. Click on '**publications**'.
3. Search in the 'contains' box: '**Think Autism**': an update to the government adult autism strategy

NHS choices

This website contains information about diagnosis, symptoms and treatment.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Autistic-spectrum-disorder/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Segar, M. Coping: A Survival Guide for People with Asperger Syndrome.

This book was written by someone with Asperger's Syndrome and offers advice on topics ranging from body language and conversation skills to finding the right friends amongst many other things. Downloaded for free: <http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~alistair/survival/survival.pdf>

Autism Hangout

Autism Hangout is YouTube page with short video tips from Tony Attwood on how best to deal with the daily challenges of autism.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/autismhangout>

The Autism Research Centre

This is the website of the Cambridge University Autism Research Centre run by Professor Simon Baron Cohen, a well-known researcher in the autism field. The website contains links to numerous research articles about autism.

<http://www.autismresearchcentre.com/>

Temple Grandin

This website is run by Temple Grandin, a well-known lady with an ASC. A film about her life was also made starring Claire Danes.

<http://templegrandin.com/>

The link below will take you to one of Temple's articles (*Social Problems: Understanding emotions and developing talents*) in which she describes how she has grown to understand emotions and developed her talents to find her perfect job. <http://www.autism-help.org/story-emotions-talents-autism.htm>

Autism Digest

This website has regular blogs from Temple Grandin and other people on the autism spectrum. It contains further information and articles on topics related to ASC's.

<http://autismdigest.com/>

Tony Attwood

This website is run by the psychologist, Tony Attwood. It contains a wide range of resources and information.

<http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/>

Charities

Below are a selection of sites and resources with information regarding local and nationwide autism spectrum charities that we hope you will find helpful.

The National Autistic Society

This is the website of the largest UK autism charity. It contains a huge amount of information about autism, including advice for those with a diagnosis, and details about available support.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Research in Autism

This is the website for a UK charity exclusively dedicated to research into interventions in autism. <http://www.researchautism.net>

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works. They are an independent charity working with adults, families and children's social care and social work services across the UK. They also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/Index.aspx>

Social Care

Care and support is the term used to describe the help some adults need to live as well as possible with any illness or disability they have. It might also include emotional support at a time of difficulty. It can include:

- Help with independent living skills
- Help seeing friends
- Help caring for families
- Help in being part of the community

Individuals on the autism spectrum are entitled to a social care assessment. This is an assessment of your care and support needs and can lead to further support or signposting. It is important to note however that while an individual is entitled to an assessment, this does not mean they will definitely be deemed eligible to receive care.

Following your diagnosis, you may wish to speak to Adult Social Care for advice and information, or to ask about having an assessment of your social care needs.

If you are resident in West Berkshire, then you can contact Adult Social Care to request an assessment.

Website: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/careassessmentandeligibility>

Email: adultcare@westberks.gov.uk

Phone: 01635 503050

Advocacy

What is advocacy?

Sometimes it can be hard for people to access support and information or ensure their wants and needs are being listened to. In these situations some people may find it useful to use an advocate. An advocate is an independent individual, someone who is not involved in that person's care or in other services they receive. The aim of an advocate is to provide unbiased support and information and to:

- Ensure that a person's personal wishes and views are taken into account
- Defend and promote their rights
- Find information and access services
- Explore different options
- Help you tell people if you are unhappy with a service you have received

Although an advocate can provide support and talk through options with you, they cannot make decisions or solve problems for you or give their opinion.

West Berkshire Council will arrange for an independent advocate to help you through the assessment process if you have communication difficulties or no-one else to support you.

Having an advocate can be very valuable for an individual in situations where they might struggle to make their views known and understood. Situations where someone might need an

advocate include while undergoing a needs assessment, preparing and reviewing care and support plans or if they are undergoing a safeguarding enquiry or review.

An advocate may, if an individual chooses and gives permission, support them at interviews and meetings, write letters on the individual's behalf and speak on behalf of the individual in situations where an individual feels unable to speak for themselves.

South West Advocacy Network (SWAN)

Swan is an advocacy charity that helps people to:

- understand their rights
- get the information they need
- make decisions
- get their voices heard

SWAN's West Berkshire Advocacy Service provides:

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA), including safeguarding advocacy and relevant persons representative.
- Independent Care Act Advocacy
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)

Website: www.swanadvocacy.org.uk/westberks

Email: WestBerks@swanadvocacy.org.uk

Phone: 03333 447928

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself and making your own needs known. The National Autistic Society has created a booklet especially to help those with an Autism Spectrum Condition do this. The aim is that by filling out relevant sections of this booklet an individual will be able to make their needs known.

The booklet includes sections on different difficulties an autistic person might experience and what helps that particular person with these difficulties as well as sections relating to education, employment, financial, health and religious needs amongst other things. It also allows an individual to state their hopes and aspirations relating to different things.

For more information about self-advocacy and to find this booklet, please visit: <https://capacity-resource.middletownautism.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/03/self-advocacy-booklet-2011.pdf>

Education

There are a variety of higher education courses including:

- adult learning courses
- online courses
- evening courses
- workshops
- part time

Some people attend courses for personal development - just for the pleasure of learning – others enrol as a first step back into learning, for work or business purposes, to increase employability, or to gain skills that they can use in their local community. Below are some links that may be helpful if you are looking to learn new skills and develop your knowledge.

West Berkshire SENDIASS

The West Berkshire Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service supports autistic young people with information, advice and guidance around college and other forms of education. The service can support up until age 25 or up until the start of a university course. Support is also available for children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers.

Website: <https://westberkssendiass.info/>

Email: westberksiass@roseroad.org.uk

Phone: 0300 303 2644

Learn Direct

Learn Direct offer a very wide range of online courses including:

- English and Maths
- Computers and IT
- Access to HE Diploma courses
- Healthcare courses
- Business courses
- Free Life Skills course

Website: <https://www.learndirect.com/>

Email: contactus@learndirect.com

Phone: 0800 101 901

Newbury College

Newbury College provide adult and community learning courses on behalf of West Berkshire Council. They offer:

- Qualification and skills

Website: <https://newbury-college.ac.uk/>

Email: info@newbury-college.ac.uk

Phone: 01635 845000

University

The National Autistic Society

The NAS website contains information about further and higher education for people on the autism spectrum.

1. Follow the link: <http://www.autism.org.uk>
2. Select Advice and guidance
3. Click on **Transitions**
4. **Click on Transitions England**
5. Select **Starting college or university**

The link below has some useful Autism specific information on choosing and applying to the right university for you. It provides insightful answers to frequently asked questions such as:

- What course should I take?
- How do I apply?

- What support can I expect?
- Do I have to disclose my disability?
- What help can I get with funding?
- Which university should I choose?
- What facilities will there be?

To find the answers to these questions and more, visit: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transitions/england/starting-college-or-university>

University Students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome

As a website, 'University Students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome' has a lot of very useful information, including information on:

- Study skills
- Tips on surviving the university environment
- First-person accounts about the experience of university by individuals who are on the autism spectrum.

Visit: <http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~cns/>

Employment

Competition for jobs is increasing and finding and maintaining employment can be tough. People on the autism spectrum might need some extra support to help them both secure a job and sustain employment.

Autism Act 2009

The Autism Act 2009 was the first ever disability specific law in England. As a result of the Autism Act the Government have to set out a strategy for supporting autistic adults as a whole as well as produce guidance for local health bodies and councils.

The Autism Strategy

This is a plan set out by the government to help autistic adults achieve the things they need, including help finding employment. There have been two strategies set out to date. The first was Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (2010). The second strategy was Think Autism (2014), which was developed using feedback from autistic people, their family and professionals on the first Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives strategy.

You can read more about the Autism strategies on the National Autistic Society website here: <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/vision-to-reality-strategy>

With regards to employment in those on the autism spectrum, these strategies set out to move towards more personalised support in finding employment for those with disabilities, which is to include autism, and start ensuring Jobcentre Plus advisors are aware of the need to make adjustments for autistic adults.

Should I disclose my diagnosis?

Whether you disclose your ASC diagnosis is entirely **your choice**. You are not legally obligated to disclose your diagnosis and whether you decide to might depend on the types of difficulties you may have (and how they may affect your work) as well as the type of job you do and your relationship with your employer.

Disclosing your diagnosis may allow you to discuss any difficulties with your employer and think about any reasonable and appropriate adjustments that could be made in order for you to achieve your potential. It may also help colleagues to understand and support you. Furthermore, if you were to disclose your diagnosis you would also then be protected under the **Equality Act (2010)**. This means that you should not be treated unfairly on the grounds of your autism spectrum condition diagnosis, which is included as a disability under this act. Naturally some employers will be more understanding and accommodating than others so it is good to weigh up your decision carefully.

Resources on employment

Please find below a selection of resources designed to give you information on employment and related issues.

National Autistic Society There is a wealth of information on all things work-related under the “Employment” section of the National Autistic Society’s website:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/employment/seeking-work>

This section of the site includes information on a number of different topics:

- Finding work
- Interacting with people at work
- Bullying
- Links to other information

The National Autistic Society also provides information and training courses.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/autism-training-and-best-practice/training/e-learning>

Your Local Jobcentre

Your local Jobcentre can help you find a job or gain new skills and tell you about disability-friendly employers in your area.

They can also refer you to a specialist work psychologist, if appropriate, or carry out an ‘employment assessment’, asking you about:

- Your skills and experience
- What kinds of roles you’re interested in

Speak to the Work Coach at your local job centre.

Programmes and grants

Your work coach can tell you about programmes and grants to help you back into work. These include:

- **Access to Work** - money towards a support worker or for the cost of equipment or travelling to work
- **Intensive Personalised Employment Support** - individual training and help to get you into work
- **Specialist Employability Support** - to help you get ready for employment or become self-employed
- **Work and Health Programme** - to help you find and keep a job



Looking for a job

When you're looking for work, look on adverts and application forms for the 'disability confident' symbol.

This symbol means:

- the employer is committed to employing disabled people
- you'll be guaranteed an interview if you meet the basic conditions for the job

Find out more on this website: <https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/looking-for-a-job>

The National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society offer support for jobseekers who are on the autism spectrum.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/job-opportunities>

Remploy

Remploy provides a range of employment services to support disabled people and those experiencing complex barriers to work. <http://www.remploy.co.uk/>

Graft Thames Valley

Graft Thames Valley is a charity which supports people from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or with disabilities and/or other complex needs into employment, training and other work-related activities.

Website: <http://graft.org.uk/>

Email: info@graft.org.uk

Phone: 07729 610536

Families

There are lots of websites that offer support for families and friends of people with an autism spectrum condition.

AspergerSyndrome.me.uk

The idea of this web site is to help families and friends who need some help or support with a child or adult with the condition Asperger's Syndrome.

Website: <http://www.asperger-syndrome.me.uk/>

Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is an online discussion forum and community for parents, carers and family members of people on the autism spectrum, people on the spectrum, and professionals. It's a safe and friendly place to share your story, get support and discuss how autism impacts on your life.

Website: <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism/early-years/parent-carer-online-community>

Mind

While not specifically for those with an autism spectrum diagnosis Mind, the leading mental health charity in the UK, have lots of information on their website for loved ones supporting someone with mental health difficulties. It includes numerous useful links from supporting someone to seek help for worries about anxiety and depression and dealing with issues such as self-harm, to supporting them with more practical issues like budgeting and finance.

Website: <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

Carers UK

Carers UK works to improve the lives of carers by providing information and advice on Carer's rights and by campaigning for changes that make a real difference to carers. If someone is caring for an autistic adult at home, they can get help and advice from Carers UK.

Website: www.carersuk.org

Email: advice@carersuk.org

Phone: 0808 808 7777

Your local Carers' Partnership (Age UK Berkshire and CommuniCare) provides confidential information, advice and guidance to carers. They can give one-to-one telephone support, they have carers groups, can advise about Carers grants and respite breaks. They also provide access to carers support groups and peer support, which is valuable if you are feeling isolated.

Website: www.carerspartnership.org.uk

Email: info@ageukberkshire.org.uk

Phone: 0118 959 4242

Relationships

There is also a huge amount of general information about relationships available online, including the different challenges some people may face in their relationships. While these resources are not specifically designed for individuals on the autism spectrum they may still be relevant for some individuals.

NHS

This site provides general advice around sexual health and sexual relationships. Topics discussed include:

- Intimate health matters
- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's)
- Fertility and contraception
- Communicating about sex
- Gay and trans health

Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexualhealthtopics/Pages/Sexual-health-hub.aspx>

The Safe Sex Berkshire website also has sexual health information, support and advice. Visit: <https://www.safesexberkshire.nhs.uk/> and find out what to do if you've had unprotected sex, advice about contraception, STI testing or want to know more about HIV or consent.

Relate

Relate is a charity offering support face-to-face, by phone and through their website. They offer various different kinds of support including:

- advice
- relationship counselling
- sex therapy
- workshops
- mediation
- consultations

Website: <http://www.relate.org.uk>

Information about abuse

To find local information and support services on abuse in West Berkshire, please visit the Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse website; <https://reducingtherisk.org.uk/west-berkshire/>

Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Romantic and sexual relationships can be difficult to understand for anyone. However, individuals on the autism spectrum may particularly struggle with certain aspects of developing and maintaining relationships. Some find it difficult to know the 'rules' of friendships and relationships. Other people on the autism spectrum may prefer to spend time on their own and may have less interest in spending time with others. Because of their unique differences, people on the autism spectrum can bring a number of positive qualities to a relationship.

Below is a selection of resources providing information and support around sexual and romantic relationships that may be useful for an autistic individual and their partner.

Different together

Different together is a website aimed at providing information, support and resources for partners of adults affected by an autism spectrum condition. It provides opportunities for individuals to connect with others in the same situation, lists of courses and workshops and various news articles and articles, amongst other things.

Website: www.different-together.co.uk

Synapse

Synapse has a site called autism-help.org which has a huge amount of information to support people on the autism spectrum. The following links in particular provide advice on different aspects of relationships:

- Sexual relationships. <http://www.autism-help.org/adults-aspergers-sexual.htm>
- Advice on some ways in which to deal with relationship difficulties. <http://www.autism-help.org/adults-aspergers-relationships.htm>

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

The NAS website provides lots of information for partners of autistic people.

Website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/partners.aspx>

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans) Foundation

If you would like any advice or support relating to gender or sexuality there is a whole wealth of information on LGBT Foundation's website. The site has pages on a number of different topics including:

- Coming out
- Staying safe (physically and mentally)
- Bullying and discrimination
- Mental Health
- Relevant news articles
- How to get involved with their causes

Website: <http://lgbt.foundation/>

Phone: 0345 330 3030

Support U

Support U provides support, advice and guidance with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues within the Thames Valley. They can assist with concerns ranging from employment to sexual health and coming out to counselling. They also operate support and social groups.

Website: <https://www.supportu.org.uk/>

Phone: 0118 321 9111 (Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 17.30pm)

Leisure activities and support groups

Leisure activities and interests are a matter of personal taste so it would be difficult for us to list all of the groups and activities to cover all interests. Good sources for local information include:

- Internet
- Library
- College
- Church
- Community Centre

West Berkshire Directory

The West Berkshire directory provides information, advice and support on a wide range of services in West Berkshire. The wide range of services for adults include where local groups or leisure activities are taking place, what help you can source to remain in your own home as well as care home information, supported living advice and much more.

Website: <https://directory.westberks.gov.uk>

Email: directory@westberks.gov.uk

Phone: 01635 503306

West Berkshire Libraries

There are lots of books about autism and related topics which you can borrow for free from any West Berkshire library. There are public libraries in Newbury, Burghfield Common, Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer, Pangbourne, Thatcham and Theale, plus a mobile library which runs across the district. Check the website for opening times and mobile library stops:

Website: www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries

Phone: 01635 519900

If you find it difficult to get to a library because of age, disability or other special circumstance, the **At Home Library Service** may be able to deliver books, spoken word cds or cassettes to your home at an arranged time and day, usually every three weeks. Phone Newbury Library on 01635 519827 for more details about this service.

There are some local leisure events specifically for autistic people:

Autism Friendly Cinema Screenings

Autism-Friendly Screenings are film screenings especially for people on the autism spectrum and their families, friends and carers.

Autism friendly films are special screenings of children's films, where subtle changes to the traditional cinema environment have been made, namely:

- Lights are left on low
- The sound is turned down
- Trailers and adverts are not played
- It's ok for people to move around during the screening and make a bit of noise

Vue Cinema Newbury
Kennet Centre
Newbury
RG14 5EN
Phone: 08712 240 240

Films are screened on the last Sunday every month at 10am.

Relaxed Screening and Performances at the Corn Exchange Theatre

Relaxed Performances are performances that specifically welcome people with particular needs and disabilities, and people with dementia may also prefer this type of performance. They aim to create a friendly atmosphere staffed by people who are aware of audience members with additional needs. We welcome everyone to our relaxed performances, which are slightly amended and designed for audiences including people with autistic spectrum disorder, learning disabilities and photosensitivity in mind.

At a relaxed screening, the soundtrack volume is reduced and low lights are left on. It's fine to make noise, move around or leave the cinema.

Corn Exchange Newbury
Market Place
Newbury
Berks
RG14 5BD

Website: <https://cornexchangenew.com/season/relaxed-screenings-and-performances>

Email: boxoffice@cornexchangenew.co.uk

Phone: 0845 5218 218

Relaxed Performances at the Watermill Theatre

Relaxed Performances are designed to welcome audience members with sensory sensitivities or anyone who might find it challenging to be in a conventional theatre environment.

You'll see the same show, with small adjustments in the auditorium.

- Bright lights and loud sound effects may be toned down or removed
- Lights will remain on low in the auditorium
- You are welcome to come and go during the show and to react however comes naturally
- If you like, you can take a break in our designated 'chill-out' area outside the auditorium

The Watermill Theatre
Bagnor
Newbury
RG20 8AE

Website: www.watermill.org.uk/access (find out about their Visual Story and details of the next Relaxed Performance)

Email: boxoffice@watermill.org.uk

Phone: 01635 46044

Support Groups

Please refer to the useful contacts section at the start of this booklet and contact organisations directly. They will be able to tell you about any support groups they run that offer support for autistic people and/or their families and friends.

Mental ill health and promoting mental wellbeing

Like all people, those on the autism spectrum can suffer from mental health problems. Every year 1 in 4 people are thought to experience mental health difficulties. There is evidence to suggest that autistic people are also more likely to experience common mental health problems. While there are many different types of difficulties that people with or without ASCs might experience, the two most common things that people struggle with are anxiety and depression. Furthermore as anxiety can lead to people feeling sad and depressed and vice versa, struggling with a mixture of anxiety and depression is common.

There are numerous ways in which people can seek help for mental health difficulties. First however it is good to understand more about different difficulties like anxiety and depression and some common signs which might help you to understand if you are experiencing these types of difficulties and if so, how you can access support.

A mental health crisis is when you feel your mental health is at breaking point and you need urgent help and support (e.g. experiencing suicidal thoughts or self harm).

What to do:

If you're at risk of harming yourself or others, please call 999 straight away or visit your local Accident and Emergency department.

If you need urgent help, but it's not an emergency call the mental health crisis team on 0300 365 0300 if you are already in contact with your local mental health services.

Your local GP surgery should offer you an emergency GP appointment if you need urgent support for your mental health.

You can also talk to:

- SANEline, 0300 304 7000 (open 4.30pm to 10.30pm, everyday)
- Samaritans, 116 123 (open 24 hours a day, everyday)

Anxiety

Anxiety is a common but unpleasant feeling that many of us will experience throughout our lives. People can experience anxiety about a range of things, such as meeting other people, experiencing new situations or worrying about their or other people's health.

While anxiety is a normal emotion, sometimes it can reach a level where it has a significant impact on a person's everyday life and may mean that they are not able to do or enjoy the things they want or need to do. If you or others are concerned about anxiety or would like some more information please refer to the links later in this section.

Depression

It is not unusual for someone to feel low, sad or tearful sometimes, especially when something particularly upsetting has happened. When someone might feel sad most of the time and when these feelings go on for longer than you might expect. When depression becomes a problem some people might also isolate themselves or not do as much as they used to. There are many things that someone might experience if they are feeling depressed. These can include: feeling low, sad or tearful, lack of motivation, feeling irritable, not enjoying the things you love, feeling lonely, tiredness, feeling sluggish, loss of appetite, poor memory and general aches and pains.

Other mental health difficulties

While Anxiety conditions and Depression are two of the most common types of mental health problems that people experience there are also many others, for example Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (ODC), eating disorders and bipolar. For more information about other mental health conditions, please see some of the links listed below.

Mind <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

NHS <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

It is important that if you have concerns about your mental health you seek support. Below are some suggestions about how you can access such support.

Even if you are not currently concerned about anxiety, depression or other mental health difficulties, it is good to be aware of your mental wellbeing and ensure you are looking after yourself.



There are five actions that everyone can do to feeling happier and healthier. They are called the five ways to wellbeing:

1. Connect – try to speak to other people regularly
2. Be active – try to add a bit of exercise into your day, even if it's just a 10 minute walk
3. Keep Learning - learning something new can increase your confidence
4. Give to Others – helping other people can make you feel good
5. Take Notice – go for a walk and take notice of your surroundings. What can you see and hear? Be present in that moment.

For more information on the five ways to wellbeing, visit the following website;

<https://westberks.gov.uk/five-ways-to-wellbeing>

Help and support for mental health

There are many ways in which you can seek support. We are living in a society where the importance of mental health and well-being is increasingly being recognised with many campaigning for better support, more understanding and reduced stigmatisation of mental health difficulties.

The organisations listed below are just an example of a few. You will be able to find even more links to support by searching online or speaking to a health professional such as your GP. In addition some people may find it helpful to talk to **friends and family** about difficulties or worries they have. They may be a good source of support and it could help them to understand you and how you are feeling.

NHS Services

If you are worried about anxiety, depression or any other mental health difficulties the first person you can contact is your **General Practitioner (GP)**. They will be able to discuss your concerns with you and may be able to offer you support or refer you to another service to help

you with your difficulties if appropriate. This may involve seeing mental health professionals, for example counsellors, psychological therapists, nurses, clinical psychologists, or psychiatrists.

The NHS website also has plenty of information about mental health difficulties, including many links to further support: <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

The National Autistic Society

This website contains information about common mental health problems, specifically aimed at those with an autism spectrum condition.

Website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health>

Mind

Mind is the leading mental health charity in the UK, offer advice and support to all people experiencing mental health difficulties. Their site includes information on different types of mental difficulties, advice on supporting someone else, typical medication and treatments that might be available for some difficulties and legal rights, amongst other things.

Website: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mind Infoline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Rethink Mental Illness

This is another big mental health charity and similarly has lots of advice and information relating to a range of mental health difficulties. They also have a phone helpline. To find out more the details are:

Website: <https://www.rethink.org/>

Phone: 0845 456 0455

Email: advice@rethink.org

Anxiety UK

This is a charity aimed at supporting those with difficulties relating to anxiety. They have lots of information on their site if you would like some more anxiety-specific support. You can also call them during their office hours (9.30am-5.30pm) or email them:

Website: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

Phone: 08444 775 774

Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Talk to Frank

If you are worried about drugs (including alcohol) you can log on to Frank's website for information, including of taking each drugs, and support. They also have a helpline, live chat sessions online (2pm-6pm, see their website) and advice on what to do in a drug-related emergency.

Website: <http://www.talktofrank.com/drugs>

Phone: 0300 123 6600 (open 24 hours)

Text: 82111

Recovery in Mind

Recovery in mind is a community organisation that delivers mental health courses to any adults in West Berkshire who experience mental health challenges and want to enjoy a more satisfying life. The courses help to increase knowledge and understanding, and to improve confidence in self-managing personal mental health and wellbeing. All courses are led by peer trainers who have had personal experience of mental health challenges and mental health professionals from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

Website: <https://recoveryinmind.org/about-us/>

Email: mail@recoveryinmind2016.com

Benefits, budgeting and finance

Autistic adults – and those who care for them – may be entitled to financial support and services from local authorities. However it is important to note that benefits are awarded on the basis of an assessment of need rather than by diagnosis. This means that having a diagnosis of an ASC does not automatically entitle you to receiving benefits.

Some benefits are paid to meet basic living costs, some are paid for specific expenses such as rent, and other benefits are paid if you meet certain criteria such as being in full-time work. The benefits system can be confusing and daunting as there are dozens of different benefits and many have complex rules.

Below are a selection of sites and resources which provide information around benefits and financial support services that we hope you will find useful.

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

The NAS website contains detailed information about the different types of support that you may be entitled to, and how you can apply for this. Please follow the link below.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/benefits-and-money/benefits/benefits-you-can-get>

The NAS have also developed a ‘**Managing Money**’ webpage with free tools and resources to help people on the autism spectrum learn how to:

- Budget
- Set up a bank account
- Pay bills
- Debit, credit and store cards

The site also provides information on different issues including:

- Saving
- Borrowing money, making payments and debt
- Insurance

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

This website has a range of fact sheets on the benefits system. You can also use their website to find your local CAB office to arrange a telephone or face to face appointment.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/>

The CAB website also has numerous pages of information and resources on how to manage money budget and resolve debts. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/>

On the Money Helper website, there is a Budget Planner. On this tool you can enter all your sources of income and expenditures and see how much you have left over monthly to spend, save or pay off debts. It allows you to email or download your results.

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/everyday-money/budgeting/budget-planner>

Citizen Advice West Berkshire

Your local CAB can provide further advice around benefits and help you to complete benefit claim forms.

Website: <https://citizensadvicewestberkshire.org.uk/>

Gov.uk

This site provides information on what benefits are available and how to apply for them including facilities to download benefit application forms. There is also a 'Benefits Advisor' service where you can do an online assessment of your financial situation to see what benefits you may be entitled to claim. <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

Welfare rights

This website contains information about welfare support: <https://www.welfarerights.net/>

Money Helper

Formerly known as the Money Advice Service, Money Helper is the new, easy way to get clear, free impartial help for all your money and pension choices. If you are struggling to manage your finances it is important to seek help and advice early to avoid the problem getting worse. Money Helper offers free, unbiased and independent advice on issues such as:

- Debt
- Bank accounts
- Budgeting
- Savings and planning for the future
- How life events such as losing your job, having a baby or setting up home might affect your finances.

Website: <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>

Phone: 0800 138 7777 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, closed Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays)

For other ways to contact Money Helper, such as WhatsApp and Webchat, visit:

<https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/contact-us/money-guidance>

My Money Steps

The Citizen's Advice Bureau also recommends a website called My Money Steps, which is developed by the National Debtline. You can enter all your financial details into their tool if you are worried about paying back debts (of any size) and it will give you advice and a personalised plan of how to deal with any problems. This site also contains some other resources and contact details should you wish to get advice via email or phone

<https://www.mymoneysteps.org/>

The National Autistic Society (NAS) The NAS have a page on managing money. While some of the information on there is very simple, there are also some links and information on how to budget etc. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/benefits-and-money/personal-finances/managing-money>

The Money Charity

The Money Charity's website also has lots of information and resources. It also has information about workshops on different aspects of money management. <http://themoneycharity.org.uk/>

Barclays Bank Barclays have a website that is set up specifically at helping people learn to manage their finances. You can view the site and access their resources here:

<https://www.barclays.co.uk/money-management/>

Step Change Step Change also has lots of information and resources on how to deal with debt amongst other things. They also have a free phone number for financial advice (0800 138 1111). You can find more information on their site. <http://www.stepchange.org/>

Useful books

Please see below for a list of books about autism that may be of interest. These are just a sample of the increasing number of books being published in this area.

General books about autism

- Attwood, T. (2014). **Been There. Done That. Try This!: An Aspie's Guide to Life on Earth**. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.
- Price, D. (2022) **Unmasking Autism: The Power of Embracing Our Hidden Neurodiversity**. Monoray.
- Beardon.L. (2021), **Autism in Adults (Overcoming Common Problems)**. Sheldon Press.
- Akhtar. Y (2021), **Understanding AUTISM, Walk a mile in their shoes: beginners guide to: diagnosis process, creating routines, managing sensory difficulties, surviving meltdowns and much more!** Independently published.
- Grandin. T and Panek. R (2014), **The Autistic Brain**. Rider.
- Frith, U. (2008) **Autism: A Very Short Introduction**. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Shore, S. & Rastelli, L. (2006). **Understanding Autism for Dummies**. John Wiley & Sons.
- Wing, L. (2003). **The Autistic Spectrum: A Guide for Parents and Professionals**. Robinson Publishing

Autobiographies written by people on the autism spectrum

- Grandin, T. (2006). **Thinking in Pictures**. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Brady. F (2024), **Strong Female Character**. Brazen.
- Middleton, E. (2023) **UNMASKED: The Ultimate Guide to ADHD, Autism and Neurodivergence**. Penguin Life.
- Sykes. M (2023) **Illuminated: Autism & All The Things I've left Unsaid**. HaperNorth.

Relationships

- Witcome Marsh. W (2023), **Dating While Autistic: cut through the social quagmire and find your person**.
- Goodall. E (2016), **The Autism Spectrum Guide to Sexuality and Relationships: Understand Yourself and Make Choices that are Right for you**. Jessical Kingsley Publishers.
- Mendes. E .A and Maroney. M.R (2019), **Gender Identity, Sexuality and Autism: Voices from Across the Spectrum**.
- Scarantino.L (2019), **Finding Love on the Spectrum: an ASD guide to dating**.
- Hecker. L (2022), **Different Planets: Understanding your Neurodiverse Relationship**
- Pike. J and Attwood. T (2019), **Neurodiverse Relationships: Autistic and Neurotypical Partners Share Their Experiences**.

Mobile apps

Touch screen devices have revolutionised the way individuals on the autism spectrum are able to communicate, learn and develop. An application (app) is a piece of software that you can download to your device. There are thousands of apps available to parents, educators and people on the autism spectrum, from expensive communication solutions to fun games. Prices vary dramatically, and some of the more complex apps are more of an investment. Similarly, there are many cheap and free apps that are also very effective in helping autistic people develop a wide range of skills. Here are a few suggestions:

(The suggestions below are not endorsed by us nor have they been tested by us. The suggestions are based on various internet site recommendations and some reports from what clients have found useful. Some apps have in-app purchases and not all apps are designed for both Android and Apple devices. The descriptions of the apps listed below are provided by the developers).

Communication- Language

Grace – Picture Exchange for Non-Verbal People- £22.99 ‘Grace is a non-speaking, simple picture exchange system developed specifically for people on the autism spectrum. Users can select pictures to form a semantic sentence that they can share by tilting the device to create a full screen view, and pointing at each card to hear the listener read each word (full screen view is not needed on the iPad). Users learn to attempt their own vocalisations with the pictures serving as a back-up or prompt, encouraging independent social interaction. Comes with a basic vocabulary of pictures, which can be fully customized using images from your camera, phone or the Internet.’

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad.

iCommunicate - £5.99 for iPod / £29.99 for iPad ‘iCommunicate allows users to create pictures, flashcards, storyboards, routines, and visual schedules, and record custom audio in any language. Add pictures from your camera, phone or the Internet. Helps teach social skills to children and young people with autism.’

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad

Emotions

AutismXpress - £0.00 AutismXpress Pro- £1.19 ‘Designed to encourage people with autism to recognise and express their emotions through a fun and easy to use interface using basic facial expressions. AutismXpress Pro offers two new games to help people with autism interpret emotions and understand facial expressions.’

Both are compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad.

Depression and anxiety

Self-Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) - £0.00

‘The Self-Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) app from the University of the West of England can help you regain control of your anxiety and emotions. Tell the app how you’re feeling, how anxious you are, or how worried you are. Then let the app’s self-help features walk you through some calming or relaxation practices. If you want, you can connect with a social network of other SAM users. Don’t worry, the network isn’t connected to larger networks like Twitter or Facebook, so you won’t be putting your feelings on blast.’

Compatible with IPod, IPad and Android.

Worry Box - £0.00

‘Have you ever wished you could put all your worries in a box, leave them there, and walk away? The Worry Box app may let you do just that. The app functions a lot like a journal: Write down your thoughts, anxieties, and worries, and let the app help you think them through. It will ask questions, give specific anxiety-reducing help, and it can even direct you to help you reduce

your worries and anxiety. It's all password-protected, so you can feel safe sharing the details of your stresses.'

Compatible with Android and Apple devices

CBT Keeper- £0.00, upgrade to remove ads costs £1.27

'Relies on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to help the user overcome anxiety and depression. CBT Keeper is a mobile app that teaches simple techniques to help you overcome depression and anxiety. It's built upon the principles of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), a proven treatment for depression, anxiety, and many other mental illnesses. CBT works because it helps you change the negative thoughts and behaviours that drag you down.'

Apps recommended by the NHS

Sleepio- £0.00 with in-app purchases

'Sleepio is an online programme that helps people overcome sleep problems. It's based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and evidence suggests it can even help people with long-term sleep problems. The course lasts six weeks, but you get 12 weeks support from the Sleepio community. Throughout the course you will have weekly online meetings with "The Prof", a virtual sleep expert who is there to guide you.

Sleepio is being used by the NHS in a few areas as a self-help therapy for people who have a combination of poor sleep and depression or anxiety.'

Compatible with Apple and Android devices

Big White Wall- £0.00 (NHS) or £25.00 per month

'Big White Wall is an anonymous digital service that supports people experiencing common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. It's available around the clock and is staffed by trained "Wall Guides" who make sure that the community is safe and supportive. Big White Wall is available on the NHS in some areas, or you can join by paying a subscription of £25 per month.'

Compatible with Apple and Android devices.

Brain in Hand (£49 per month or £99 with additional support from the NAS)

Brain in Hand provides people with personalised support from an app on their phone. Features include instant access to pre-planned coping strategies, a diary to help structure time and "recipes" for difficult to remember tasks, a monitor to track anxiety levels and a system to request support if things don't go to plan.

Website: www.braininhand.co.uk and <http://braininhand.co.uk/#sthash.tljyyACC.dpuf>

While this app could be considered quite expensive it is possible for some individuals to get funding for this. For more information you can read more about buying the app and funding here <http://braininhand.co.uk/who-we-help/individuals-parents-carers/>

Social skills

QuickCues- £0.00 with in app purchases at £3.99.

'QuickCues is a social script app that helps teens and young adults on the autism spectrum to handle new situations and learn new skills. Social scripts have been used successfully for years, but QuickCues makes these tools mobile and easy to use in everyday situations. With Quick Cues you can add four additional modules each priced at £3.99. The Communication module comes pre-installed and provides help with conversations at school or work, listening, and talking on the telephone. It also gives tips on reading body language and finding shared interests with others. Available for additional purchase via the In-App purchase are Life Skills Module, Socialization Module and the Coping Module.'

Compatible with Android and Apple devices.

West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board
Signposting pack
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